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PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

THE KIDNAPPED FRESHMAN

A COLLEGE FARCE

BY

F. T. VREELAND

DICK & FITZGERALD
PUBLISHERS
18 Ann Street, New York

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DICK & FITZGERALD, Publishers, 18 Ann Street, N. Y.

The Kidnapped Freshman

or

The Sophomore's Joke

A College Farce in Three Acts

By F. T. VREELAND
Author of Fleeing Flyer

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The Kidnapped Freshman.

NOTE:—The professional acting rights of this play are expressly reserved by the publishers, to whom theatrical managers who wish to produce it should apply. Amateur representation may be made without such application and without charge.

CHARACTERS.

STEPHEN CRAWFORD.....*President of his class*
ALONZO CRAWFORD.....*His father*
CHESTER ELLIOTT.....*Stephen's room-mate*
MICKEY SWEENEY, BILL GOGGINS.....*Burglars*
ABIE KIRSCHBAUM.....*Always ready for business*
HARRY THOMPSON, JACK PHILLIPS, ALFRED CUTTING, JIMMY FLACK, TOMMY SWIFT.....*Members of Psi Nu*
PAUL RANSOM.....*Stephen's friend*
MRS. RANSOM.....*Paul's mother*
MABEL RANSOM.....*Paul's sister*
MRS. MCNULTY.....*The landlady*
GERTIE MCNULTY.....*Her daughter*

FRESHMEN, SOPHOMORES, BILL COLLECTORS, FRATERNITY MEN, ETC.

TIME.—The present. LOCALITY.—Any college town.

TIME OF PLAYING.—Two and a quarter hours.

NOTE.—Throughout the play the name of any college may be used, and the names of any fictitious fraternities substituted for Psi Nu and Beta Theta Lambda.

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I.—STEPHEN'S room. Deputation of bill collectors. Escape of STEPHEN. Refuses to join fraternity. Interference with freshman banquet. Kidnappers arrive. STEPHEN and CHESTER bound, gagged and carried off.

ACT II.—Psi Nu frat room. Four days later. Police baffled. No trace of the kidnapped. Where are they and how can we find them? STEPHEN'S father arrives. All start out on search. Burglars tell of their discovery in house previously visited. The kidnapped stolen. STEPHEN in the chimney. More bill collectors. MABEL and GERTIE to the rescue. STEPHEN again stolen.

ACT III.—Same as ACT I. Reappearance of STEPHEN. Locked in closet. Flight of BILL and MICKEY. Why MRS. MCNULTY always tried the closet door. STEPHEN rescued. MABEL'S ruse. All surprised. How MABEL and STEPHEN took matters in their own hands.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

STEPHEN CRAWFORD. About 21, freshman, president of his class and hence a man of the world. In college for the sake of the activities outside of it. Norfolk suit of a vibrant style, chocolate colored shoes, collar a la mode, neck-tie like a stained glass window gone mad.

ALONZO CRAWFORD. About 45, a business man of emphatic type. As fond of his son as if he had won him in a business deal. Black cutaway suit, iron gray trousers, square derby, red bandanna handkerchief.

CHESTER ELLIOTT. A freshman, about 19. College holds no terrors for him. Costume similar to STEPHEN'S.

MICKEY SWEENEY. About 25. A burglar, rather gabby. Gray shirt, black cap, utterly disreputable suit such as is given to the deserving poor, broken shoes and gray spats. Chef's cap and apron.

BILL GOGGINS. About 26, MICKEY'S partner, with more of the taciturn air of the power behind the throne. Costumes similar to MICKEY'S, no spats, dancing pumps. Chef's cap and apron.

ABIE KIRSCHBAUM. About 40, practical philanthropist and helper of the deserving, when it pays. Urbane and always

open for business. Purple suit, yellow vest with red dots like scarlet fever, derby hat.

Sophomores. Dark suits and soft hats.

Harry Thompson
Jack Phillips
Jimmy Flack
Tommy Swift

Young students. Any clothes likely to attract attention—exaggerated pockets, large cuffs on sleeves and trousers, low shoes, raidant socks, trousers cut high to display them.

Alfred Cutting. About 21. Get-up strongly individual—drab suit badly in need of pressing, soft collar and shirt, flowing black tie resembling a piece of crepe.

Paul Ransom. About 20. Dandified costume—neat blue suit, olive green neck-tie, soft hat with flaring brim, silk socks, patent leather pumps, yellow gloves.

Mrs. Ransom. About 45. A lady of weak amiability, well aware of her own existence. Dark dress with plenty of black beads. Bugles in ears. Over-trimmed hat. Traveling coat.

Mabel Ransom. About 18. Pretty and sprightly. Dress must be white and suitable to a girl of her age. Light traveling coat and hat, in good taste.

Mrs. McNulty. A widow about 40. Lets rooms to students for the sake of her daughter. Gray skirt and black silk waist. In Acts II and III she wears a drab coat that is too small and a hat that has lost ambition.

Gertie McNulty. About 17. Impressionable, and having red hair, if desired. Blue skirt and white waist. Bristles with red ribbons.

Other College Students. Suitable costumes. For watch fobs, many of them wear baggage checks with their class numerals.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES.

Shade on alcove window. Pillows on cots. Pair of pajamas and two shirts on Morris chair. Electric student-lamp on each desk. Drawing-board with paper thumb-tacked on it. Writing paper, ruler, pen, knife, bottle of red ink and bottle of black ink on desk L. Waste basket under desk L. Keys in closet and room doors. Three handkerchiefs, socks, shirts, tie and clean collar in dresser drawer. Suit-case, several suits, overcoats, wilted collar, two flowered bath-robes, etc., in closet. Loose brick in fire-place. Telephone off stage. Portable oil lamp for student. Bell off stage. Caps and hats on hat-rack in hall. Two long ropes and two large handker-

chiefs for sophomore for gagging STEPHEN and CHESTER. Large roll of money for ABIE. Revolver and large apple for JIMMY FLACK. Revolver for a student. Fountain pen and check-book for MR. CRAWFORD. Tray with glass of milk and crackers for PAUL. Chef's cap and apron, jimmy, pocket knife, black jack and partly eaten apple for MICKEY. Dark lantern (or electric torch), knife, large dish towel, chef's cap and apron for BILL.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R., means right hand; L., left hand; C., center of stage. L. C., left of center; R. D., door at right; L. D., door at left. UP, means toward back of stage; DOWN, toward footlights.

The Kidnapped Freshman.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Typical students' room occupied by* STEPHEN CRAWFORD *and* CHESTER ELLIOTT. *Evening; lamps are lit. Door* R. *in rear flat. Dresser* UP C. *Alcove with two cots* UP L., *behind them a window. Pillows, bedding, etc., on cot. Shade on window. Clothes closet* L. C. *with key in door. Several suits and other wearing apparel seen hanging in closet. Desk* DOWN R. *with books and papers. Another desk* DOWN L. *on which there are engineer's designs, writing material, bottle of red ink, books, papers, etc. Waste basket under desk* L. *Morris chair with pajamas and shirts flung on it near desk* L. *Other chairs, etc., about room. Carpet or rugs on floor. College banners and decorations in the usual student's taste. The rear drop may be flat and extend across the stage, provided it has a door and a window with two cots placed against it.* DISCOVERED CHESTER ELLIOTT *working at an engineering design at desk* L. STEPHEN CRAWFORD *rushes in* R. D. *looking back as though being pursued; runs over to closet, goes inside and closes door.*

CHESTER (*going to closet*). Bill collectors again, Steve?

STEPHEN (*through door*). Of course.

CHESTER. How many this time?

STEPHEN. Oh, half a dozen or so, Ches. Didn't stop to count.

CHESTER (*locks closet and sticks key in shoe. Goes to* R. D. *and locks that also. Returns to desk. Sharp knocking heard at* R. D. *Shouting*). Why the devil are you making all that noise? Go away and stop bothering me.

MRS. MCNULTY (*off stage*). How dare you talk like that to your landlady? It's Mrs. McNulty!

CHESTER *starts and then grins sardonically. Goes to door and unlocks it.* ENTER MRS. MCNULTY R. D.

CHESTER. Beg pardon, Mrs. McNulty—thought you were someone else—several persons, in fact.

MRS. MCNULTY (*truculently*). You'd better beg my pardon. I've stood enough from you two, with all the rent you owe. Where's Mr. Crawford?

CHESTER. I'm acting as his secretary just now. Wish to see him about anything?

MRS. MCNULTY. *I* don't—but some gentlemen friends in the parlor do. They've come a-callin' again to get him to be generous to his creditors. I s'pose they'll get as much satisfaction as I do.

CHESTER. You should wish your fellow-beings better luck, Mrs. McNulty.

MRS. MCNULTY (*vindictively*). Maybe they'll get it. They say if they have to, they'll come up here and grab him—and I hope they do. Where is he?

CHESTER. What would you say if he'd gone out the window? (*Points*)

MRS. MCNULTY. Well, of all the impertinence! I s'pose the two of you'll be beatin' your rent that way some night! (*Going to window*) I've a good mind to nail it up and put a grating across!

CHESTER (*sitting at desk*). If you did, of course, we should feel in duty bound to notify the building department that this room was a fire trap. Then we should leave your house—and you couldn't hold us for our rent!

MRS. MCNULTY (*coming forward wrathily*). That's about enough impudence; I've stood your cheek as long as a good landlady should. The freshmen in college this year are the nerviest lot I ever saw, and you two beat them all, especially Mr. Crawford—and him their president, and as good as engaged to my Gertie.

CHESTER. He's not so bad as all that.

MRS. MCNULTY (*emphatically*). I say he *is* goin' to be engaged to my Gertie! That's why I take a mother's interest in his goin's on. Not studyin', nor payin' his bills and rent. If he don't pay me his rent now, how do you s'pose he'll treat me as his mother-in-law? I'd just like to speak to his father. Lemme tell you, if you two don't pay your rent in a couple of days, I'll get the sheriff after you! (*Bounces to* R. D.)

CHESTER (*sweetly*). You'll tell the financial delegation not to

waste time waiting? (MRS. MCNULTY *goes out slamming the door*) Thanks! (CHESTER *goes toward closet and stoops to take key out of shoe. Straightens up with a jerk as* GERTIE ENTERS *breathlessly* R. D.)

GERTIE. Oh, Ches, where's Steve? Mommer's in such a temper over him—and those men outside won't go away.

CHESTER. Oh—ah—yes—Steve. Didn't your mother tell you he'd left for a while?

GERTIE. Yes, but I want to know where he is.

CHESTER. Why, Gertie, owe you anything?

GERTIE. Yes—a little talk. I'd like to tell him he ought to reform. I don't think his reckless ways are fair to me, because I'm his—his friend. And he hasn't been acting nice at all to me lately—doesn't seem to know I'm still in the house.

CHESTER (*going to desk*). I'm afraid I can't tell you where he is. He left no directions where I should forward his mail—didn't have time.

GERTIE (*going toward* R. D.). Well, just tell him when he's back that if he treats me same's old times, I'll see if I can't make mommer give him more time for his rent. (EXIT, *closing door.* CHESTER *goes to alcove window and looks out, then steals to* R. D. *He softly opens it a crack, bends over to peer through, and flings it wide.* ABIE KIRSCHBAUM *is disclosed in the hall with his eye at the height of the key-hole, and the two almost rub noses*)

ABIE (*straightening up with an ingratiating smile*). Caught you at it! What a choke we should bot' do der same t'ing! I wass lookin' to see if dere wass anyone in der room, so I should knock politely to come in.

CHESTER (*almost stunned by such coolness*). Well—what are you after?

ABIE (*taking sidelong glances around the room as he pushes in*). Nottings—nottings. You mistake me. Have I said I wass after anyt'ing? No. I leave it to you. I am chust here as a deputation from some chentlemen dot are wearin' out der furniture in der parlor. If you don't like it, blame dem.

CHESTER. Well, what can I blame them for?

ABIE (*eagerly*). Dey chust want to know if Mr. Crowfoot can spare dem a little of his money. Times ain't so good as dey wass.

CHESTER. Tell them he would, only he isn't here.

ABIE. Is dot so? Well, well. (*Lowering his voice and leaning close to* CHESTER, *confidentially*) If he coult make himself

appear before me and settle my account—chust a leetle one—maybe I coult tell de oders dot he wasn't here, Hein?

CHESTER (*raising his voice*). I say he isn't here. Do you want me to show you? Come! (*He accompanies* ABIE *on a march around room and into alcove, pointing under beds and Morris chair, etc.*) You see. He won't be on hand for some time.

ABIE (*shaking his head*). Well, well. You ain't willing to pay any of it yourself? Of course you coult easy get it from him afterwards.

CHESTER. No—times ain't so good as they was.

ABIE. Y'ain't short yourself? I coult advance you a leetle—(*Pulling out big roll of money*)

CHESTER (*pulling him gently but firmly toward door*). Steve does all the borrowing for this suite.

ABIE (*going toward* R. D.). Well, if you ever need it, don't forget your old friend Abe Kirschbaum. Lowest rates on der hill. (*Hands card to* CHESTER) [EXIT R. D.

CHESTER (*closes* R. D. *quickly, takes deep breath and throws card in waste basket. Listens a moment at* R. D., *then tiptoes to alcove window and looks out cautiously; steals to closet door and unlocks it*). Say, Steve, if you're not dead, you might like to know that they're gone.

STEPHEN (*staggering out*). I'm nearly gone too. Where's some air? (*Gasping*) Came near being smothered by all those suits I haven't paid for. Almost wished I hadn't been so extravagant. I'd like to have had all the oxygen the widow McNulty was using.

CHESTER (*earnestly*). Say, Steve, you'd better let things drop with her daughter. You heard her say she considers you engaged?

STEPHEN (*taking off wilted collar and putting on clean one at dresser*). Nothing but a rumor.

CHESTER. *She* doesn't think so. You'll get yourself in trouble. If she finds you're fooling, she'll get breach of promise damages—by taking you to court for her rent. And if your old man hears of it—and Mabel Ransom.

STEPHEN (*wrestling with tie*). Oh, I won't let it get too far—trust an old hand like me, Ches, Mabel needn't hear of it.

CHESTER. That's just why she will.

ENTER PAUL RANSOM R. D.

PAUL. Ah there, boys.

STEPHEN. } Hello, Paul.
CHESTER. }

STEPHEN. Frosh, show the soph to a chair.

CHESTER. Certainly, frosh. (*Pointing to Morris chair with shirts and pajamas on it*) Will you honor lower yourself to that? Steve's shirts are very soft.

PAUL. Thanks—I'll sit on my own shirt. (*Sweeps pajamas and shirts into* CHESTER'S *waste basket*)

CHESTER (*rising*). I'll go see how the arrangements are coming along for the frosh banquet next week. (*Goes towards* R. D.)

PAUL. Not going on my account, old man?

CHESTER. On my own account, old man. I couldn't exist long in the rarefied atmosphere of a sophomore. (PAUL *throws the waste basket at him and grabs the red ink from desk as* CHESTER EXITS *quickly* R. D.)

STEPHEN (*stopping* PAUL'S *hand*). Don't throw the red ink—it wouldn't help his complexion. (*Puts bottle back on desk*)

PAUL. Room-mate's pretty fresh. How do you manage to keep from massacring him?

STEPHEN. Guess I'm fresh too.

PAUL. He's got maudlin leanings toward Beta Theta Lambda, hasn't he?

STEPHEN (*smiling*). Maybe—that why he's fresh? (*Starts picking up waste basket, putting away shirts and pajamas in alcove room*)

PAUL. Tried to bunco you into joining them?

STEPHEN. No use if he does. No use your trying to get me into Psi Nu either, if that's why you came. I won't join.

PAUL. But, Steve, you haven't given Psi Nu the thorough consideration one would expect from a man of your powers.

STEPHEN (*smiling*). Have so.

PAUL. I say you haven't—I ought to know. A fine bunch of fellows at Psi Nu—good house—good times—what more could a mere mortal ask? We want men like you. Here you were practically unheard of, and yet you became frosh president. You're beginning to show up good. What college honor couldn't you get, if you had us back of you?

STEPHEN. I tell you, Paul, you're wasting eloquence.

PAUL. Why?

STEPHEN. I haven't got the money, as I've told you before. Been running up too many bills. If my old man ever hears of them he'll yank me out of college and set me on an office stool. He certainly wouldn't approve of all the social fuss

and feathers in a frat. He sent me here to get a little knowledge—Heaven help me.

PAUL. We can also help you to it. (STEPHEN *makes a gesture as though brushing the offer aside*) But, Steve, Mabel will be up to the house often—she and mother'll be here in a couple of days to see me in the play. (*Pause*)

STEPHEN. Well—I'm listening.

PAUL. Well, all the fellows at the house will meet her. Do you want to be out of it?

STEPHEN (*with patient resignation*). I'm sorry, but she won't be able to wear my frat pin. She'll have to wear yours. I can see her up here anyway.

PAUL (*nettled*). Now I know that bumptious room-mate has been slandering us before you.

STEPHEN (*coming nearer*). Paul, if you say another word about fraternities I'll grab you by the necktie and drag you out.

PAUL (*rising nonchalantly*). I guess I'd better leave before you injure me in a vital spot. (*At the door*) Remember, when Mabel comes up, drop around and have a look at her. Bye-bye. [EXIT R. D.

STEPHEN. So long. (*Sits down at his desk* R. *and arranges books and papers.* CHESTER *pokes his head in* R. D. *and looks cautiously around*)

CHESTER. He's gone?

STEPHEN. That was my impression.

ENTER CHESTER R. D.

CHESTER. Did he get his clutches on you?

STEPHEN. No. (*Slamming down book*) Doggone it, I'd like to join his confounded old frat—d'you hear me, but I've got to refuse for the sake of my father's temper.

CHESTER (*going to desk*). Life might be different with the Beta Theta Lambda. There were a couple of the Lambs around to-day, and——

STEPHEN (*grinning*). No good, young feller—I see through your nefarious designs. To change the subject, how was the frosh banquet committee?

CHESTER. All right—but there's something else that isn't.

STEPHEN. What?

CHESTER. I heard there that the sophs have their hooks out for us. So we'd better lock our doors when we go to bed.

STEPHEN. Ches, if we'd paid any attention to such reports before, we'd have broken into jail as the only safe place. (*Ris-*

ing and going to closet) But that reminds me—must keep up the grand old tradition of locking our closet door. If our landlady takes a suit for her rent—(*Puts hand on key, but drops it and turns as* ENTER R. D. *eight stalwart figures, clad in dark suits and with hats drawn low over their faces. They shut the door*) Ah! Bill collectors?

SPOKESMAN. No—we've come to collect you. We've got you now, frosh. Guess the freshmen won't be so perky after the little vacation we're going to give *you.*

STEPHEN. The devil you will, you damned sophs! (*Hurls books at them and attempts to charge past. One sophomore dives down, crawls quickly around him, and seizes him from the rear. Others grasp and choke him, while he struggles furiously.* CHESTER *jumps for the window, but others leap after and pull him back*)

SOPHOMORE. We'll take you too. Guess there's room for you in the buggy.

SPOKESMAN (*standing to one side and directing assistants in a low voice*). Remember, Vets, no gouging! (*Grunts and swear-words*) Come, this will never do, put more life in it. Here, you Ags, put your hands over his nose like a cow. Confound it, no science! Hey, Medie, where's your anatomy? Wallop him where it will do the most good! (*All go down in a heap*)

MRS. MCNULTY (*off stage*). Stop that sky-larking.

SPOKESMAN (*starting*). Ah—yes'm! (*Locking door*) It's stopped. Just a football game. (*Loudly to writhing, kicking group on floor*) Down! (*In lower tone*) Here's the ropes. (*Starts to truss up* STEPHEN *with ropes*)

SOPHOMORE (*from the ruins*). Hey, you darn fool, you're tying up my leg!

SPOKESMAN. Oh, excuse me. (*Changes rope*)

ANOTHER VOICE. Now you got mine!

SPOKESMAN (*loudly*). Confound it, don't make so much noise over trifles. (*A sophomore separates himself from the mass and together they quickly bind* STEPHEN'S *arms and legs and gag him. The others rise. Those who have tackled* CHESTER *have succeeded also in fettering him.* ALL *stand panting, loudest of all the* SPOKESMAN) A couple of you throw some things into a suit-case for them. Don't mind if the socks aren't mates. (*Two drag out a suit-case from the closet and start hurling articles in it*)

SOPHOMORE. Now how the deuce you goin' to get them out of here without gettin' caught? Thought there wasn't to be any

row—and here we've stirred up the landlady and maybe a million more. (*All stop and stare in disgusted quandary at* SPOKESMAN)

SECOND SOPHOMORE. Well, I'll be flabbergasted!

SPOKESMAN (*wiping forehead with hand*). Phew! I really hadn't expected this. (*Looks around in dilemma*)

SOPHOMORE. Well, what you goin' to do about it—after makin' us get ourselves all bunged up?

SPOKESMAN (*pauses a moment—suddenly*). Ah, I know. Get their bath-robes and put them on 'em! (SOPHOMORES *hustle very flowery bath-robes out of closet and throw them over two prisoners without putting arms in sleeves, moving leg bands nearer the knees so as to be hidden. Meanwhile* SPOKESMAN *takes three handkerchiefs from dresser and pours blots of red ink on them from bottle on* CHESTER'S *desk*)

SPOKESMAN (*tying handkerchiefs around* CHESTER'S *jaw, and* STEPHEN'S *head and chin*). Now then! Carry 'em to the buggy quietly. If you're asked, say they've been injured in a foot-ball game here and are going to the hospital. And if anyone gets too noisy about it, poke him in the nose—unless it's the prexy! (EXEUNT *all* R. D. *carrying* STEPHEN *and* CHESTER *as though wounded*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Parlor of Psi Nu Fraternity. Four days later. Evening; lamps lit.* R. C. *an old-fashioned fire-place with irons and logs. At* R. *rear, large open doorway through which in the hall is seen a hat-rack clustered with caps. Those supposedly coming from the hall door come through the doorway from the right, those coming from upstairs from the left. Telephone in hall. At rear center, a lounge. Upright piano* UP L. *corner. Door* L. *Table in* C. *Magazines, etc., on table. Chairs, decorations, electric lamps, etc.* DISCOVERED *a dozen students, (more or less to suit taste) seated or walking about the room, with one lowering the fire insurance rate on the piano.* JAMES FLACK *on lounge gorging a huge apple.* HARRY THOMPSON *comes into hall at* R. *hangs hat on rack and* ENTERS *room. Piano stops and all look at* HARRY.

JACK. Any news of the lost ones, Harry?

HARRY (*sitting*). Not a mouthful, Jack. Chief Brown admits the police are as far away from finding them as they were four days ago. Can't trace them, though they ought to have been as conspicuous as Mohammedans with those bandages. Says he's suspected everybody, but it does no good.

ALFRED (*dolefully*). Lost, strayed or stolen—a perfectly good candidate for our frat.

HARRY. What I can't see is, why didn't we Psi Nus grab Crawford in the start? Back home Paul knew him well, and he should have given us advance information that Crawford was a born member of our frat. It was clear neglect of duty by Paul.

ALFRED. I must contradict you, Harry. Who could tell that Crawford was going to bust into a sky-rocket the way he has?

JACK (*going and standing in front of fire-place*). What we *should* have done doesn't matter any more than a tailor's bill. The question is, will anything be done about it now by this select collection of brains?

ALFRED (*rising forcefully*). Yes!

JACK. What?

ALFRED (*lifting his fist*). Get him!

JACK (*witheringly*). Thanks for the suggestion, Alf. Tell it to the police. Since you seem to know so much about it, perhaps you'll tell us where?

ALFRED. Haven't I told you where till I feel like a train announcer?

HARRY. You mean Beta Theta Lambda?

ALFRED. Where else? (*All snicker*)

JACK. Calm yourself, mister, calm yourself.

ALFRED (*growing excited*). I won't calm myself. You may laugh—prophets have always been laughed at until it's found they've picked the best bets. I say again, those fellows have been gathered in by Beta Theta Lambda. Haven't some of the Betas been hanging around here the last couple of days, spying on us so we woudn't spy on them?

JACK. That proves nothing. I've noticed some freshmen standing shyly on one leg in the middle distance, as if they wanted to be asked in.

ALFRED (*crushingly*). A blind. Beta Theta got them to do it, so their own men wouldn't look suspicious.

HARRY. But Chester Elliott's missing too—and he's friendly to Beta Theta.

ALFRED. Another blind. All the time he's probably hypnotizing Crawford into the frat. We've got to rescue him.

JACK. In other words, steal him? (ALFRED *nods*) Well, I don't know——

ALFRED (*thundering*). I do know. If they've stolen him from us, why shouldn't we steal him from them? We should trail them to find where he's in exile. If we can't get him that way, we should go to them in a body and demand him—if only from humanitarian motives. (*Waving his arms and warming up*) We ought to demand his release as an American citizen and a free college student, whom professors even can't imprison! (*Lights go out and everybody yells*)

VOICES (*off stage shouting*). "Lights! Lights! Turn on the lights!"

HARRY. There go those blamed lights again.

JACK. Cheapens the bills, anyhow.

FLACK. Who stole my apple? (*Sounds of a scuffle in the darkness. The lights suddenly go up again—everyone says "Ah!" ALFRED is revealed still standing, his arms poised in a dramatic position and his mouth open undramatically. FLACK is struggling with others on the lounge over his apple. It is thrown under the lounge, he dives beneath and rescues it*)

JACK. You can talk again, Alfred, we can see your arms now.

ALFRED (*flatly*). Well, my idea is that we get busy and start things moving. (*Sits down lamely*)

HARRY. But where'll he get the doubloons with which to join us, with all the debts Paul's told us about?

ALFRED. Hasn't his father offered a reward of one thousand dollars? And if we produce the son——

ENTER *at doorway* PAUL, MRS. RANSOM, MABEL RANSOM *and* MR. ALONZO CRAWFORD.

PAUL. Fellows, let me introduce my mother and sister Mabel. (ALL *bow*) And this is Mr. Alonzo Crawford, Stephen's father. Captured him down at the station with my folks.

HARRY. Mr. Crawford's come up to recover his son?

PAUL. Yes—we thought we'd all come here as a sort of base of operations. (ALL *sit*)

MR. CRAWFORD. Any of you know where my son is? Tell me, what person has taken my son, who never did a mean thing all the time I've known him? Boys—*gentlemen*—I appeal to you as his friends. Where the devil is he? I am

willing to pay as high as two thousand dollars for his return—cash on delivery. He is worth all of that to me. Where is he?

JACK. I'm sorry we haven't got that two thousand dollars' worth of information.

MABEL. Oh, dear.

ALFRED (*stepping forward*). But here's our chance to find out where he is.

MABEL (*eagerly*). Oh, is there a way to find out? I'd be ever so much obliged to you if you would.

HARRY. But how is this our chance?

MR. CRAWFORD. Yes—how? Speak up!

ALFRED. If we take Mr. Crawford with us to the Beta Theta Lambda house, he'll reinforce our demand for Stephen. Even a depraved crowd like the Beta Thetas won't dare keep a son from his rightful father.

MABEL. What, is another fraternity holding him—maybe torturing him with an initiation every day?

MR. CRAWFORD (*jamming on his hat and starting toward doorway*). I'll get after them right away. (*Stopping at doorway*) Er—where are they?

ALFRED (*following*). I'll escort you.

MABEL. You'll escort me too, won't you? (*Goes toward doorway*)

MRS. RANSOM (*horrified*). Mabel! Stop and think what you've said. At night—when you don't even know where the hotel is.

MR. CRAWFORD. Mrs. Ransom, let her come—I don't mind.

MRS. RANSOM. Let me think it over.

ALFRED (*getting hat from rack and turning at doorway*). Any you fellows coming on the raid? (*As the* STUDENTS *look at each other dubiously, lights go out. Screams from* MRS. RANSOM)

MRS. RANSOM. Mabel, we won't stay here another instant.

MABEL. All right, mother. We'll go with Mr. Crawford.

MRS. RANSOM. No, no! Paul, Paul!

PAUL. Nobody's gone off with *me*. It's all right, mother—a dynamo just got tired. (*Shouts outside of "Lights! Lights!"*) Hey, you numskulls, haven't you ever heard of oil lamps? (*Sounds of* STUDENTS *going out*) [EXIT *several* STUDENTS L. D.

MRS. RANSOM. Paul, take me to our hotel at once. Mabel, you won't desert your mother at this moment?

MABEL (*disappointed*). No, I won't—bother it! (PAUL, MABEL *and* MRS. RANSOM EXEUNT *as a couple of* STUDENTS

ENTER L. D. *with a portable oil-lamp, which they set on center table*)

ALFRED (*with* MR. CRAWFORD *at doorway*). You fellows coming now? Better do something instead of being cooped up in this dark house. It'll be as cheerful as a Pullman sleeper when the lights are turned off and the snores are turned on.

JACK (*hastily*). All right, we'll come—to be sociable. Harry, you, Ed. and Jim better stay and keep house. (*The marooned ones groan*)

[EXEUNT *all others doorway, getting hats from rack.*

HARRY (*surveying room gloomily*). I might enjoy this place better if I were dead. (*Taking up lamp*) Come on, this light will just fit my cosy little boudoir. (EXEUNT HARRY, FLACK, JIM *and* ED. *doorway.* HARRY *with light pauses in hall to left of doorway*)

HARRY (*off stage*). Hello—give me 726—J. Hello—Light and Power Company? When're you going to give us back our lights? When it pleases Providence! Say, don't you get sassy with me! If you don't give us that electricity soon, we won't pay our bill for two months ago. (*Sounds of receiver being slammed down. Light withdraws, leaving stage in darkness*)

ENTER *very softly* L. D. BILL GOGGINS *carrying a dark lantern which he flashes about the room, and* MICKEY SWEENEY *who stumbles and falls heavily.* MICKEY *carries a small jimmy.*

BILL (*in angry whisper*). Mickey, you mug, ain't you old enough ter be trusted wit' feet?

MICKEY (*resentfully*). How was I ter know dey'd be leavin' apples on deir parlor floor? I didn't know it was de style. (*Lamp held aloft above* HARRY'S *head suddenly gleams in doorway.* FLACK *and* STUDENT *beside him carrying revolvers.* BILL *and* MICKEY L. D.)

ENTER HARRY, FLACK *and* STUDENT *doorway.*

HARRY (*commandingly*). Stop! We'll shoot! (BILL *and* MICKEY *stop slowly and turn back*)

MICKEY (*throwing down jimmy in disgust*). Well, if dat ain't de darndest luck! Dished twicet in one night! Say Bill, let's give up burglary fer politics.

HARRY (*setting lamp on center table*). I imagine you *will* be working for the state during the next four years. Come nearer the light and let's see who flattered us by thinking we were worth robbing. (*In the dim light the burglars approach while the two* STUDENTS *take post at the two entrances*) I see you haven't got anything from us. You don't appear to be very skillful.

BILL. Young feller, don't make us feel any wuss'n we do. (MICKEY *makes a quick move as though to pull out a weapon*)

HARRY. Hands up! Jimmy, ought to have thought of that before. (*As both put up their hands* HARRY *searches them. Takes from* MICKEY'S *pockets a knife, a black-jack and a large, partly eaten apple. Looking at apple near lamp*) H'm! Looks mighty like Flack's apple. (*Bowing to* MICKEY) Excuse me—you did get some swag. But you said you were dished twice to-night. How was that? (BILL *and* MICKEY *hang their heads.* HARRY *continues search*) Come, come, don't be bashful. Tell us.

MICKEY. It don't show us up good. (*His hands begin to sag, but they shoot up again at a warning wave of revolver held by* FLACK)

HARRY (*searching* BILL *and finding knife*). I never knew before that burglars crave to be shown up good. Go ahead, tell us. Want to be coaxed, like company? (*Finishing search*) You may haul in your paws now.

MICKEY (*with sigh of relief*). T'anks, young feller. Just fer dat I'll tell youse. We was walkin' past a house couple o' blocks away when de lights all blew out. We dunno much about dis town, but we decides we'll take a chancet on de house. So we shins up a tree to a top-story window, and slides into a store-room. We was crawlin' t'rough as nice as yer please when all of a suddent Bill's lamp shines behint a stack o' furniter. It hits two of de awfulest faces yer ever seen. Clean gives us de creeps, dey did. Right away we done a creep down de tree, and den made a scoot fer dis place.

HARRY (*growing excited*). What were they like?

MICKEY (*shuddering*). Like—like livin' corpses—mummies. Dey seemed all bent up like and covered wit' wall-paper. Eyes a-poppin' and a'poppin'—but not a squeak out o' dem—'nd faces all held togedder wit' bandages.

HARRY (*jubilantly*). Good! Good! It's them all right! (*Jigs*)

FLACK. What poor devils are you crowing over?

HARRY. Crawford and Elliott.

FLACK. But Beta Theta is more than a couple of blocks away.

HARRY. Hang Beta Theta! It's them, and they've been right under our noses. No wonder the police didn't discover anything but a lot of clues. (*To burglars*) Here, lend me your tin ears. Take us to that house, help us lug those men here, and we'll let bygones be bygones.

MICKEY (*scornfully*). Say, young feller, I t'ought youse had sense. I may be a burglar, but t'ank Heaven I ain't so low as ter steal de dead! Dey's no money in it.

HARRY. They're not dead, only imprisoned—the way you'll be if you don't lend us a helping hand. (*Burglars hesitate a moment*)

BILL. All right, we'll take de contract, as a special favor. (*All start toward* L. D.)

HARRY. Flack, give me your revolver. You stay behind—the fewer the better. Be ready for us, and whisper it to the others. [EXEUNT ALL *excepting* FLACK, L. D.

ENTER R. *doorway* TOMMY SWIFT *and two underdone Freshmen.*

FLACK (*returns to* C. *of room. Lights go up*). What's the surprise party, Tommy?

TOMMY. When I was following the bunch I overheard those frosh saying they were going to swoop down here. So I came to help along with any trouble—they seem to want something.

FIRST FROSH (*rather plaintively*). We want our president. The banquet won't be any fun without him.

FLACK. And why do you think we can supply him for your banquet?

FIRST FROSH. A frosh saw a couple of men come here a few minutes ago, and it looked suspicious.

FLACK (*with a superior wave of the hand*). You can chase along. We haven't got your president in stock.

FIRST FROSH. I think you have.

FLACK. Don't think—let the professors do that for you. (*Pointing to doorway*) Git!

FRESHMEN. No!

FLACK *and* TOMMY (*bucking them*). Yes! (*They give freshmen rush through doorway*)

TOMMY (*returning to room*). Should have sent them to pester Beta Theta Labda.

FLACK. No, they guessed right.

TOMMY. What, Crawford's here?

FLACK. No, but he will be. (*As* L. D. *opens*) Here's the relief party.

ENTER STEPHEN *helped in by* BILL, MICKEY, HARRY *and student, the latter still carrying revolvers.* STEPHEN'S *ropes are off but bandages remain around his head. They set* STEPHEN *hurriedly on lounge and pull off bath-robe and bandages, disclosing a large red stain on his cheek from the ink.*

STEPHEN (*rubbing himself vigorously*). I only wish I were French so I could embrace you all! Where's Ches?

HARRY. We turned him loose.

FLACK. You chump. Now he'll bring the Beta Theta crowd here.

STUDENT. And we ought to have grabbed that frosh we saw scurrying through the bushes.

HARRY (*with deprecating hand*). Now, now—don't reminesce about the past. Let's tackle the burning question of the moment. What are we going to do with our prize?

STEPHEN (*rising in surprise*). Why, you're going to replace me at 63A Thurston avenue, aren't you?

HARRY. I guess you won't go back to 63A Thurston avenue for some time—maybe never.

STEPHEN. Never?

HARRY. We'll just invite you to stay here until you're initiated—as a sort of command performance.

STEPHEN (*protestingly*). But I haven't the price of admission!

FLACK. Mr. Freshman, you have a higher market value than you think.

STEPHEN. G'wan!

FLACK. Your father's just offered a reward of two thousand dollars for your return.

BILL (*pointing*). What—*fer him?*

STEPHEN (*with hauteur*). Don't you believe I'm worth it?

BILL. Oh, Mickey, to t'ink dat we run away from two t'ousand dollars! (*They condole with each other*)

STEPHEN. How does the two thousand let me past the doorkeeper?

HARRY. We get it for turning you up. (BURGLARS *look at him*) We pay your debts and frat expenses. Anything left over we can use—that old chimney needs fixing. We can put

up a brass plate that it was repaired through your generosity. Got any objection now to associating with us?

STEPHEN (*scratching head*). Can't think of any at the moment.

HARRY. We'll tuck you away here so nobody else will form a violent attachment to you. (*Long ring of bell off stage*) There's the door-bell! (ALL *turn fearfully in direction of doorway*)

FLACK (*creeps to entrance and peers cautiously out toward right. He steals back to others. In a loud whisper*). Abie Kirschbaum—and I'll bet the others are bill collectors! (STUDENTS *are panic-stricken*)

HARRY (*to* STEPHEN). Get up the chimney!

STEPHEN. What!

HARRY (*running to chimney, followed by others except* BILL *and* MICKEY). See, you can get on these projecting bricks and hang on for all you're worth!

FLACK. Are they loose?

HARRY. Not very.

STEPHEN. Not very!

FLACK. If you fall, you won't fall far.

STEPHEN. If I fall! Say, what do you fellows take me for—a mountain climber? You don't catch me doing any gymnastics up your chimney.

HARRY. Listen to reason. It's the best we can do in the time allowed. We'll shift you later. (*Banging on door and vigorous ringing of bell*) Do you want those bills collectors to get the reward, and squeeze out their bills besides?

STEPHEN (*running to chimney*). Anything to beat those collectors. Boost away! (ALL STUDENTS *boost him up chimney with hands and backs.* BILL *and* MICKEY *stand aside* UP C. *They put their heads together and point toward* STEPHEN *as he disappears.* HARRY *sees them*)

HARRY (*pointing to* BILL *and* MICKEY). Flack, take them into the kitchen and have 'em act like chefs, if it costs all our crockery. (EXEUNT FLACK, BILL *and* MICKEY L. D. *Bell rings again.* HARRY *throws himself into a chair*) Now for mercy's sake look natural. (*One* STUDENT *throws himself into seat and takes up magazine, while second* STUDENT *goes through doorway*)

ENTER R. D. *second* STUDENT *with* ABIE KIRSCHBAUM *and four* COLLECTORS.

ABIE (*suavely*). Hope we don't dislocate you, but a freshman dot I was visitin' said Stephen Crowfoot wass here. So I invited der boys around to pay him a little call.

HARRY (*coldly*). I'm afraid you won't be paid anything in return. He's not among us.

ABIE (*shaking his head*). Well, well. But we can look der house up, ain't it?

HARRY (*rising with forced anger*). By what right do you invade this house?

ABIE (*with spirit*). By what right do you keep him here?

HARRY (*stormily*). He isn't here!

ABIE. Den it won't hurt if we look around! (*Subsiding with an ingratiating smile*). If you let us look, I'll charge only t'ree per cent any time you ask.

HARRY (*turning gruffly to other* STUDENTS). Show them around upstairs.

ABIE (*smiling*). And I'll stay down here and have der pleasure of your company. (HARRY *makes a gesture of vexation.* EXEUNT ALL *except* ABIE *and* HARRY. ABIE *points to bandages and bath-robe on lounge*) Why are dose dere?

HARRY (*starting*). Oh—er—because—because of an initiation! (ABIE *starts to look under lounge. A broken brick falls into fire-place*)

ABIE (*straightening with a jerk*). What's dot?

HARRY (*gulping*). Sparrows.

ABIE. Sparrows!

HARRY. Robins, maybe.

ABIE (*going toward fire-place*). I'd like to see robins dot wass hod-carriers.

HARRY (*walking in front of him*). No, no! You're only likely to be hit with another one. The robins are dangerous when annoyed. And the old chimney's coming apart.

ABIE (*drawing back sympathetically and putting right hand in pocket*). Say, if der house needs any money to fix it——

HARRY (*leading him back to center of room*). No, we expect some money for it shortly.

ENTER MRS. MCNULTY *tumultuously at doorway followed by* GERTIE.

MRS. MCNULTY (*to* HARRY). Where's Stephen Crawford? Give him to me at once.

HARRY (*positively*). We haven't got him to give away.

MRS. MCNULTY. You have. A freshman next door to me

swore he was here. Give him back to me. You're holding him for that reward.

ABIE (*smoothly*). Don't you worry, Mrs. McNulty. If he's here, me and my frients will get him.

MRS. MCNULTY (*turning on him fiercely*). You! Where do you come into this? (*With an access of venom*) I believe you've got him already.

ABIE (*vigorously*). I believe *you've* got him alretty. You only come here to chuckle a bluff. You're keepin' him till he signs up wit' your goil.

MRS. MCNULTY (*seething*). How dare you. For shame. Makin' my daughter blush.

ABIE. Well, ain't she used to blushing? (BILL COLLECTORS *and two* STUDENTS *crowd in through doorway*)

STUDENTS. What's the riot?

HARRY. Why don't you hunt for him at the Beta Theta Lambda house? His father's gone there to get him.

MRS. MCNULTY. I'll go there. I want to see his father. (*Clutching* HARRY'S *arm*) And you'll all come too. I'll have no tricks. Gertie, stay and watch the house.

ABIE (*to a* COLLECTOR). You stay and look after *her*. And don't let her do all der work of huntin' for dot feller. (MRS. MCNULTY, ABIE *and three bill* COLLECTORS *herd* PSI NU *men out doorway*)

GERTIE. I hear voices—and they're not heavenly either.

[EXIT L. D. BILL COLLECTOR *follows her with determination.*

ENTER *at doorway from* R., PAUL *and* MABEL. MABEL *sinks on lounge wearily.*

PAUL (*anxiously*). Mabel, you should have stayed at the hotel with mother. These hills weren't made for young ladies' shoes.

MABEL. I couldn't rest with Stephen missing.

PAUL. You'd better rest here while I get you a drink—of milk—and a bite to eat.

[EXIT R. *doorway.* MABEL *gets up listlessly.*

STEPHEN (*tumbles into the fire-place, landing on the logs. His clothes, hands and face are streaked with soot*). Hello!

MABEL. Stephen! (*She runs to him with outstretched arm. He extends his arms toward her, but suddenly recoils*)

STEPHEN (*with uplifted hand*). Stop!

MABEL (*faltering*). Why, Stephen, aren't we still friends?

STEPHEN (*pointing to himself*). Yes—that's why I don't want you to touch me.

MABEL (*coming nearer in a flutter*). Oh, Stephen, you seem to have dropped from Heaven.

STEPHEN (*surveying himself*). Look more as if I came from the other place.

MABEL. Why were you hidden there—in the chimney, I mean?

STEPHEN. It's the way the fellows tried to get me in their frat. But I lost my grip on things.

MABEL. You're hurt?

STEPHEN. Not when I see you again. (MABEL *turns away shyly and sits on lounge*)

MABEL. Er—Stephen, you look as messy as you did when you were fussing with that old dynamo and telegraph instrument in high school. Remember?

STEPHEN (*dropping beside her*). Do I? Do you remember the telegraph alphabet I taught you?

MABEL. Yes.

STEPHEN. I wonder. (*Takes her hand. Her eyes widen*) Just for an experiment. (*On her palm his right forefinger taps three words*) What was that?

MABEL (*turning head away*). I—I don't understand.

STEPHEN (*smiling*). Yes, you do! You witch, you want me to do it again. They're the words every girl wants repeated.

MABEL (*her head still averted*). How do you know?

STEPHEN. Oh, I know all right. Now, I'll do it once more. (*Taps three words*) Spell the words.

MABEL (*shrinking more than ever*). I—I can't.

STEPHEN (*leaning nearer*). Then, to make sure you got them right, do what's recommended in telegrams—send them back to me, I'll spell them. (*Slowly, with her head down, she taps with her forefinger on his palm*) I l-o-v——

MABEL (*turning to him swiftly*). Oh, Stephen! (*They embrace and* STEPHEN *imprints a large dark kiss on her forehead, just as* PAUL *appears in doorway with a tray bearing a glass of milk and cracker*)

PAUL. Stephen! (*The milk and crackers go to ruin on the floor,* STEPHEN *swings around, leaving* MABEL'S *face and clothes liberally sprinkled with soot*)

STEPHEN. Paul!

PAUL. Flack said in the kitchen you were safe up the chimney.

STEPHEN. I couldn't stay long in the higher altitude.

PAUL (*grabbing* STEPHEN'S *arm*). Get back. You'll be caught by those upstairs.

STEPHEN (*backing away*). No, thanks! I've seen all the sights there once. College hasn't fitted me for a chimney sweep.

PAUL (*pulling* STEPHEN). For Heaven's sake get out of sight.

STEPHEN (*resisting*). No! I've had enough of that life. Why shouldn't I appear in public? (*As* PAUL *is trying to drag him along.* GERTIE *appears* L. D.)

ENTER GERTIE L. D.

GERTIE. Stephen! (*Running forward*) I'll rescue you!

STEPHEN (*breaking from* PAUL *and running*). I don't want you to rescue me.

PAUL. } Come, here! Come here! (*Chase* STEPHEN
GERTIE } *around* C. *table,* MABEL *watching with disfavor*)

STEPHEN (*grabs a chair, lifts it threateningly and holds them at bay on other side of table*). If you come a step nearer, I'll muss you up.

GERTIE. Oh, Steve, come on home with me right away.

PAUL (*looking at* GERTIE *curiously*). H'm! Seems as if you two are only practising future domestic scenes.

STEPHEN. Don't you believe yourself. (*Lowering chair*) Paul, I'd like to speak to these young ladies alone. Will you kindly put yourself on the retired list?

PAUL. I'm rather interested in this case.

STEPHEN (*suddenly*). A bill collector's upstairs—in your room, I think. Did you lock up your new clothes? (PAUL *in alarm* EXITS *doorway. Thumping fist on table emphatically*) Now, Gertie, this has got to stop.

GERTIE (*a maiden in distress*). What, all is over between us? (MABEL *winces*)

STEPHEN. No good your getting crazy about me. (*Indicating* MABEL) I'm practically engaged to this young lady.

MABEL. You're not.

STEPHEN. Mabel.

MABEL (*nearly in tears*). You think you can deceive me and carry on with several girls at once! (*Shifting and looking at herself*) And then you dare to give me these—these marks of affection. (*Turns away*)

STEPHEN (*going to* MABEL). Mabel, I swear I was never faithful to any girl but you.

MABEL (*going toward doorway, sobbing*). If you'd given me a diamond engagement ring I'd give it back to you!

STEPHEN. Mabel, for Heaven's sake don't say that! It's awful! (MABEL *continues toward doorway*) Mabel, where are you going? (*He steps after her*)

MABEL. To my b-brother. (*As she goes out*) No wonder you knew that g-girls w-want it r-r-repeated. (STEPHEN *halts beside lounge and looks after* MABEL *in blank dismay*)

[EXIT MABEL *doorway, and goes* L.

GERTIE (*turning on him vindictively*). I'm goin' to get my mother and tell her how you've been lurin' me on! (*Flounces out doorway, going toward* R. STEPHEN *sinks on lounge crumpled.* BILL *and* MICKEY, *capped and aproned as chefs, poke heads in at* L. D.)

ENTER BILL *and* MICKEY L. D., *carefully steal upon* STEPHEN. *With scarcely a struggle or sound they gag him with a dish towel they carry. They bind his ankles with the ropes lying on the lounge and tie his wrists together behind his back, so that his hands are left free to move. Then they bear him quickly toward* L. D.

MICKEY (*hoarsely, as they go out*). Here's where we kidnap dat two t'ousand dollars!

[EXIT BILL, MICKEY *and* STEPHEN L. D.

ENTER *doorway* JACK, ALFRED, GERTIE, MR. CRAWFORD, CHESTER, ABIE, BILL COLLECTORS, PSI NU MEN, BETA THETA LAMBDA MEN, FRESHMEN, SOPHOMORES *and* MRS. MCNULTY *who is pulling* HARRY *by the arm.*

MRS. MCNULTY (*fiercely to* HARRY, *who retreats*). Now will you hand him out to us? Will you—or won't you? Isn't it enough for you to send us scramblin' off to Beta Theta Lambda when he was stuck here all the time?

HARRY. Now, Mrs. McNulty——

MRS. MCNULTY. Not a word! (*Pointing to* CHESTER) I s'pose you want to deny what he says about you and your gang grabbin' Stephen for yourselves?

CHESTER. What do you mean by keeping him from the Psi Nus?

ENTER *doorway* BILL COLLECTOR, PAUL *and* MABEL, *who is dabbing at her eyes.*

MR. CRAWFORD (*stepping toward* HARRY). Will you let me have my own son? Will you—or must I call out the police?

HARRY (*holding up his hand to stop*). Mr. Crawford, if your son were restored to you, would you make an appropriation for his debts?

MR. CRAWFORD. Yes. (*Joyful cries from* MRS. MCNULTY *and* BILL COLLECTORS *of "Good" "That's a great idea!" "Fine business man!"*) I'd have to anyhow.

HARRY (*holding up hand again*). And if our frat should happen to have him, would you let him join us—and pay us the reward?

ALL (*to* MR. CRAWFORD, *protestingly*). No, no! Don't you do it! It's extortion.

CHESTER. I should get the reward for first telling Mr. Crawford his son was here.

GERTIE. *I* should get it because I saw Stephen here.

MRS. MCNULTY. *I* should get it for making Mr. Crawford come here. (ALL *squabble,* BILL COLLECTORS, FRESHMEN *and* SOPHOMORES *joining in*)

MR. CRAWFORD (*breaking through wrangling group around* HARRY). I'll do anything to get my boy—except listen to this raving. For Heaven's sake let's have a look at him.

HARRY. All right. (*He saunters to fire-place, while* ALL *stand still and watch him attentively. Looks up chimney, then suddenly claps hand to right eye and begins dancing on hearth-rug*)

ALFRED. What's the matter?

HARRY (*in anguish*). A landslide hit my eye. (*Attempts to gouge it out*)

ALFRED (*anxiously*). Blow your nose. Blow your nose.

HARRY (*still dancing*). I won't blow my nose.

MR. CRAWFORD (*coming angrily forward to* HARRY). What do you mean by these antics when you should be producing my son?

HARRY. Darn your son, I don't know where he is.

MR. CRAWFORD. What, you said——

HARRY. I thought he was up the blasted chimney, but he's gone.

ALL. Gone!

MRS. MCNULTY (*furiously*). You've taken him away.

HARRY. I haven't! *You've* done it, if anyone has.

ABIE (*pushing forward*). I'd lend money to bet she has.

MRS. MCNULTY. I haven't. You have!

ENTER FLACK L. D.

FLACK (*to* HARRY). Those burglars tied me up and skipped!

ENTER *a* FRESHMAN *breathlessly at doorway.*

FROSH. Say, I just saw two awful tough-looking men haul a fellow away from here! (ALL *give a yell and pile out doorway.* HARRY *stands petrified.* MR. CRAWFORD *totters to a chair and* MABEL *sinks on the lounge*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The same as* ACT I. *Ten minutes later. The stage is dark, save for dim moonlight through alcove window. Pencils, writing paper, knife and lamp on desk* L. *At rise of curtain the room is empty.*

ENTER BILL *at doorway. He glides in closing door and flashing dark lantern about; creeps to alcove window, setting lantern on floor.* BILL *and* MICKEY *are still wearing chef's caps and aprons.*

BILL (*softly*). Ain't a mug in de house, Mickey. H'ist him up —but don't butt me in de stummick wit him. (*Sounds of hoisting and labored breathing by* BILL. STEPHEN, *bound and gagged, appears in window and is dragged into room, being laid on the floor.* MICKEY *climbs into window and tumbles into the room.* BILL *in an angry whisper*) Sh! Can't yer keep out of de way of yerself?

MICKEY (*rising and rubbing himself resentfully*). Well, dis a darn fool place ter bring him—right back ter his own stable!

BILL (*lowering window shade*). Ain't I told yer it's de last place dey'll look fer him? We'll have a little time ter lay low and find another place ter hide him. Here, lend a hand, if yer got one left. (*They lift* STEPHEN *and bring him into study,* BILL *picking up lantern. They stand* STEPHEN *against desk at* L. *with his back toward audience, while* BILL *turns on desk lamp*)

MICKEY. Where you gonna store him away, Bill?

BILL. Som'ers where he'll keep. And say, while we're lookin' fer a good place we might's well look fer his coin too. (BILL *and* MICKEY *prowl around, opening bureau drawers, etc.*

Meanwhile STEPHEN *manages after some straining to clutch a pencil on the desk behind him, and painfully scrawls on paper under his hand. Then he slowly hops around so that his back is toward* L., *at right angles to his previous position, and begins waggling his fingers rapidly at burglars, who have been looking under beds at* L., *rear. They stop on hands and knees and watch open-mouthed*)

MICKEY. Say, Bill, what's he doin'? (*In sudden panic*) Bill —is he hypnotizin' us? (*Scrambling on all fours behind* BILL) You get de hypnotism! I can't stand it.

BILL (*watching closely*). Looks like he's tryin' ter teach us de dummy language. (*Fingers all stop and point with pencil to writing on paper.* BILL *rises with elaborate caution, steps nearer on tiptoes, and looks at writing*) Why, he's been writin' in back of him!

MICKEY (*impressed*). Writin' backwards! Must be keepin' himself in practice. Read it ter me, Bill——I wasn't brought up dat way.

BILL (*bending over and deciphering*). He writes—he writes—"Let me write!" (*Straightening up. To* STEPHEN) No, t'anks, we don't want no letters from you.

MICKEY. Aw, go ahead, Bill, let him, I likes ter see it. A college guy dat kin write like dat standin' up backwards oughter write swell sittin' down frontwards. (*Persuasively*) Maybe he'll tell us where we kin get his coin.

BILL (*grudgingly*). Oh, all right—but it'll have ter be short an' sweet. (*They seat* STEPHEN *at* CHESTER'S *desk* L., *bind upper part of arms and release his right forearm, keeping his left bound.* BILL *sets paper before him and* STEPHEN *writes,* BILL *guarding the free arm*)

MICKEY (*hanging on every motion*). Look at 'im write, wit' only one hand free—and wit'out lickin' de pencil. Gee, ain't a college eddication wonderful! Say, Bill, what's it all about?

BILL (*reading in a sing-song voice—rolling his head from side to side and following writing with his finger*). Fer Heaving's sake let me go if yer have any feelin' in yer hearts unite me—no, untie me I'll get yer de two t'ousand if yer do dere's a "——(*Stops and stares at writing intently*)

MICKEY (*tremulously*). What is it? Somep'n awful?

BILL. Couple o' wiggles an' a curl.

MICKEY (*testily*). I can see dat meself. Go on—what's de rest?

BILL. Oh—it's "goil"—of course! (*Resuming reading*) "Dere's a goil I must speak ter or lose her fer good."

MICKEY (*delighted*). Ain't it great! (STEPHEN *looks at him*) Ter say all dat wit' a few lines. (*To* STEPHEN) Go on. Write some more.

BILL (*raising his hand, his voice troubled with emotion*). No. He has wrote enough.

MICKEY. Not fer me.

BILL (*clearing his throat confidentially*). Mickey—h'm—I must admit dat he has reached me. Wimmen is my greatest weakness.

MICKEY. Writin's mine.

BILL (*suddenly binding up* STEPHEN'S *right hand again*). But I've got a weakness fer dat two t'ousand. Someone's on de porch! (*Voices sound faintly outside.* BILL *crumples paper on which* STEPHEN *has written and throws it in waste basket*)

MICKEY (*lifting* STEPHEN *out of chair hastily*). Where'll we sling him?

BILL (*tearing off cap and apron and slapping them on* STEPHEN'S *head and shoulders*). Into de closet. We'll lock it. (MICKEY *also slaps his cap and apron on* STEPHEN. *They push him into closet and lock door*)

MICKEY. What'll we do wit' de key?

BILL (*removing key*). I'll take it.

MICKEY (*suspiciously*). And have yer sneak here an' get him out by yer lonesome? Not much! (*Grabs key from* BILL)

BILL. Yer want de reward fer yerself, do yer? I'll take it. (*Seizes* MICKEY'S *hand and a slight struggle starts. Voices approach*)

MICKEY (*in whisper*). Here dey come, we'll plant it under de carpet here. (*Puts key under edge of carpet near closet door. Runs to alcove window, has a tussle with window shade, and climbs out while* BILL *turns off light swiftly and follows him*)

ENTER *doorway* MABEL, MR. CRAWFORD, *and* MRS. MCNULTY, *who turns on light.*

MR. CRAWFORD (*looking around woefully*). I thought that a glimpse of the rooms where my poor boy studied and toiled upward in the night (MRS. MCNULTY *sniffs*) might help console me for his loss, but somehow it doesn't. Oh, where is my boy now? Where is he? (*Answering own question*) Probably miles and miles away at this moment.

MRS. MCNULTY (*raising window shade*). Have sense. He was took away only a few minutes ago.

MR. CRAWFORD. My loneliness, madam, convinces me that he is miles away. And I can hardly stir another step after him. (*Sinks back in Morris chair after feeling its softness*)

MABEL (*crossing to* MR. CRAWFORD *and laying her hand on his arm*). Mr. Crawford, I feel for you. I—I miss Stephen too. I—I thought I wouldn't, but now he's gone——

MRS. MCNULTY. Then you ought to be on the go after him, like my Gertie.

MR. CRAWFORD (*with dignity*). Mrs. McNulty, I am quite satisfied if Mabel stays beside me. I appreciate her sympathizing with me. (*To* MABEL) You may do it all you like, my dear. (*Sniff from* MRS. MCNULTY, *who goes over and tries to open closet door*)

MRS. MCNULTY. Locked, as usual.

MR. CRAWFORD. As usual? Why, is it always locked?

MRS. MCNULTY (*still rattling knob*). I've always found it that way.

MR. CRAWFORD. Always found it—Mrs. McNulty, have you tried to force your way into my son's closet?

MRS. MCNULTY (*defiantly*). Every chance I could.

MR. CRAWFORD (*sternly*). Why?

MRS. MCNULTY (*facing* MR. CRAWFORD). To sell some of his clothes. Do you suppose I was goin' to let him have these elegant rooms for three smiles a week? (*Determinedly*) And while you're here, you might as well pay me the bill he owes. It'll save him the trouble.

MR. CRAWFORD (*rising sorrowfully*). Mrs. McNulty, it pains me deeply to hear you state that my son owes you any rent. If he *was* going to owe his rent, he might at least have done it in cheaper rooms.

MRS. MCNULTY. But you said you'd pay his bills.

MR. CRAWFORD. So I did—provided I get him back.

MRS. MCNULTY. Don't you hope to get him back.

MR. CRAWFORD (*explosively*). Certainly! But I combine the father with the business man. And my business caution compels me to doubt any bills, even my son's, until I've seen evidence of them.

MRS. MCNULTY (*going to doorway*). If you don't believe me, come and look at my books. Try your business caution on them.

MR. CRAWFORD (*following*). Excuse me a moment, Mabel. Very important. (EXEUNT MRS. MCNULTY *and* MR. CRAWFORD. *An instant later a telegraphic tapping sounds on closet door*)

MABEL. Stephen! (*Runs to closet door and pulls on knob. More rapping*) No, I won't scream. Come out, come out. (*Rapping. She listens*) He's in your landlady's place, he won't hear. (*Rattling knob*) Oh, where's the key? (*Rapping. She listens, then searches under edge of carpet near closet and pulls out key*) I've got it. (*Just before inserting it in lock she stops. Softly*) Stephen, you—you really do like me better than her? (*Furiously rapping.* MABEL *eagerly unlocks door and starts to clutch* STEVE, *but stops a moment in astonishment. With his back to closet door,* STEVE *stands still bound, a chef's cap on head and aprons on shoulders.* MABEL *grasps him by arms*) Stephen! (*Wipes hands on aprons. Pulling off towel*) How did you get there?

STEPHEN. By courtesy of the burglars. (*She seizes a knife from* CHESTER'S *desk and cuts ropes.* STEVE *turns swiftly and holds out arms*) Mabel!

MABEL (*backing away with a smile*). One experience was enough. This time I'll credit you with the good intention.

STEPHEN. That won't do for me. (*Puts on an apron, approaches her, wipes off his mouth on apron, leans forward gingerly, kisses her on cheek, wipes off her cheek*) There's a sanitary salutation. You shouldn't have asked me if I like you better while I was in there. How could I convince you with my arms tied? (*Turning away ruefully*) But I won't convince my father in any way after Mrs. McNulty's through with him. When she's told him all about my debts and her daughter, it'll be good-bye to a rice bath for you and me.

MABEL. No, no, it won't. I know your father likes me.

STEPHEN (*dejectedly*). That's the reason he won't want you to have anything to do with me. Serves me darn good and right. But that doesn't make me feel any more inclined to face his bristling eyebrows.

MABEL. You don't deserve such a punishment. (*Suddenly*) I know what we'll do; we'll—we'll—(*Lowering her head*) Stephen, give me your hand. (STEPHEN *wipes off hand on apron and gives it to her*)

STEPHEN. There—feel better?

MABEL. This is what we'll do. We'll——(*She taps a word on his palm*)

STEPHEN (*excitedly*). D'you mean it? (MABEL *nods.* STEPHEN *starts to embrace her, but ends by shaking her hand solemnly. He throws apron off and goes to alcove window quickly*) This way out.

[EXEUNT MABEL *and* STEPHEN *through window.*

ENTER *doorway* MR. CRAWFORD *and* MRS. MCNULTY.

MR. CRAWFORD. I'm sorry to see my son hasn't paid his rent. But I suppose it's an old college custom. (*Looking around*) Where's Mabel? Kidnapped too?

MRS. MCNULTY (*scornfully*). Guess she's taken my hint and gone to look for your son. (BILL *is dragged in doorway by* JACK, ALFRED, HARRY, CHESTER, GERTIE *and several others*)

JACK. Now will you show us where you've put him? (*Noticing* MR. CRAWFORD) Ah, Mr. Crawford—we caught this kidnapper near here.

MR. CRAWFORD (*going to* BILL, *fiercely*). Where is my son? Where is he? Have you no respect for my gray hairs—or don't you care if they *are* gray?

BILL. See here, old gen'leman, if I show you where he is, do I git dose two t'ousand cabbage leaves fer all de trouble he's give me?

HARRY (*stepping forward*). What, you're demanding money for him? It's insufferable.

BILL (*scornfully*). I suppose youse was only goin' ter charge dat two t'ousand fer board? (*To* MR. CRAWFORD) Well, are yer goin' ter gimme dat little souvenir?

MR. CRAWFORD (*walking up and down distractedly*). Yes—oh yes! I suppose I'll have to give money to someone. It might as well be you.

BILL. Write down yer promise, so yer don't fergit. Write down too dat yer won't stop payment on de check before I've cashed it. (*Takes paper which* MR. CRAWFORD *writes out, reads and pockets it*) Very nice. Now write out de check.

MR. CRAWFORD (*pausing*). Only for value received. When I get my son——

BILL. Not till yer writes out de check and leaves it dere. (*Points to desk* L. *Fiercely*) Don't yer t'ink I'm honest? (MR. CRAWFORD *takes out check-book, writes a draft and places it on desk*) T'anks very much. Now I'll make yer son appear wit' a few quick passes. (*Goes to edge of carpet near closet and searches under it, all watching. Finds no key—burrows. Looks blank, stops*) Dey's been a t'ief here! (*Suddenly jumps to closet door, grabs knob and pulls. Door flies open and* BILL *staggers back, looking dazedly at closet*) Wow! (*Leaps into closet and paws around among clothes, knocking most of them down*)

MR. CRAWFORD (*sharply*). You're making passes enough, but I don't see him.

BILL (*emerging, baffled*). I ain't got him.

MR. CRAWFORD (*snatching up check and pocketing it*). So, you tried to get the check when you didn't have him. Thank Heaven I saved my money.

BILL. I did have him. I'll bet my pal's grabbed him offen me.

MR. CRAWFORD. Where would your pal go?

BILL. I dunno, but he can't be far away, de snake.

MR. CRAWFORD (*going to doorway*). Come on! (*Doggedly*) I'll get my boy this time or I'll—I'll increase his reward! (EXIT *doorway.* ALL *start to follow him, including* BILL)

HARRY (*putting up hand and stopping* BILL). You're not invited. Tommy, stay and keep him here—see he makes himself completely at home, same as in jail. (EXIT HARRY, *doorway.* MRS. MCNULTY *pauses on threshold*)

MRS. MCNULTY (*indicating closet*). Gertie—you stay too—and keep an eye on those clothes. (EXEUNT *all but* GERTIE, BILL *and* TOMMY. TOMMY *picks up aprons, throws them in closet and begins to close door,* GERTIE *watching him.* BILL *starts to sidle toward alcove window*)

GERTIE (*turning her head sharply*). Stop! (BILL *stops near window as* TOMMY *steps toward him. To* TOMMY) Leave him to me. (*To* BILL, *pointing imperiously*) Come back here, sir!

BILL (*admiringly*). It's wort' it, just to look at a goil wit' noive like yourn! (*Comes nearer her slowly*)

GERTIE (*looking down with a demure smile*). Go 'long with your blarney. Were you going after your friend, like the rest of them?

BILL. Yer guess me t'oughts pretty well, fer a stranger.

GERTIE. And when you got him, you'd bring him back here, of course?

BILL (*frankly*). Honest, miss, dere wouldn't be enough of him left. After de way he trun me down, I'd just have ter eat him alive.

GERTIE (*drawing back in flattering feminine alarm*). What a terrible man you must be.

BILL (*modestly*). Oh, I ain't so bad. (*With a regretful sigh*) Dey's plenty worse in de business.

GERTIE. Hasn't anyone ever tried to reform you? (TOMMY *looks at her, gives a silent whisle and strolls into alcove*)

BILL. No one, miss.

GERTIE (*going up to him*). Would you like to be reformed?

BILL (*eagerly*). Would you like to take de job, Miss?

GERTIE (*considering him*). I think you would be rather an

interestin' man to raise. (TOMMY *punches bed-pillows in glee*)

BILL (*smoothing his hair*). Start right in, Miss.

ENTER *doorway pulling in* MICKEY, *remainder of characters excepting* MABEL, STEPHEN *and* MRS. RANSOM.

MR. CRAWFORD. Here's the snake.

BILL (*crossing over to* MICKEY, *ferociously*). Dey got yer, did dey? (*To* STUDENTS *holding* MICKEY) Just let me tell him a few t'ings wit' me fists.

GERTIE. Don't, remember, I'm reformin' you.

BILL. All right, Miss. But I just want ter put me hands on dis bloke before I reform. (*Approaches* MICKEY *with fists clenched*)

MICKEY. What's de matter, Bill? Don't yer recognize yer ole pal Mickey?

BILL. Yes, I recernize yer all right, but nobody else will when I git t'rough wit' yer. Whatcher done wit' dat student we was ter share?

MICKEY (*astonished*). What have I done wit' him? Nuttin'.

BILL. Looky here now, Mickey Sweeney, I advise yer as yer friend not ter pull dat bluff wit' me! Yer better not do it wit' dat closet open and him gone. (*Points to half-open closet door*)

MICKEY (*starting forward*). Well, if dat ain't a surprise.

BILL. I suppose yer'll say yer didn't take him now, after bein' so anxious about dat key?

MICKEY (*angrily*). I didn't take him. Took him yerself. Yer was just as crazy fer de key.

BILL (*coming closer and raising fist*). You tell me where yer put him, he's mine as much as yourn.

MICKEY (*wagging head in* BILL'S *face like a terrier*). I ain't got him, an' you know it better'n I do.

MR. CRAWFORD (*stepping forward*). It's my belief you've both got him—and you're both bluffing.

ENTER *doorway*, MABEL *and* STEPHEN *whose face is washed.*

STEPHEN. Nobody's bluffing for once, dad. I've got myself.

ALL (*amazed*). Stephen! (MR. CRAWFORD *rushes to him and shakes him by shoulders in delight*)

STEPHEN. Look out, dad. Don't kill me. I'm not the fatted calf.

MR. CRAWFORD. Where've you been?

STEPHEN. Calling on a minister. (*Taking* MABEL'S *hand*) Permit me to present the girl who has kindly consented to let me pay her dressmaker's bills. I'm going to settle down and prove worthy of them.

MRS. MCNULTY (*fiercely*). I'll have you to court for desertin' my Gertie.

TOMMY (*stepping forward*). Don't you bother. From what I saw, Bill there has burglarized her interest.

MRS. MCNULTY. Gertie! (GERTIE *looks at floor*)

CHESTER. You eloped, Steve?

STEPHEN (*looking at* MABEL). No—kidnapped.

MR. CRAWFORD (*handing* MABEL *the check*). Let me give you this reward for kidnapping him.

CURTAIN.

OAK FARM

COMEDY DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

By ANTHONY E. WILLS

PRICE 25 CENTS

Seven male, four female characters, being first old man, leading man, comedy, character heavy, three comedy characters; first old lady, leading lady and two lady comedy characters. Time of playing, 2½ hours.

SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS.

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Act IV.—The widow and the superintendent. The house surrounded by rioters. The telegraph message. The wires cut.

Act V.—A wife's sacrifice and husband's remorse. The rioters dispersed. Home and love once more.

THE DEACON

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Nine male, six female characters, including eccentric comedy old man, juvenile lead, genteel villain, negro, country boy, first and second walking lady, comic old maid, juvenile, and soubrette. Four of the male characters may be played by one utility man. Time of playing, 2½ hours. Easily staged, and full of startling incidents.

SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS.

Act I.—*Scene*—Eastville Hotel garden. The robbery. Pete delivers an invitation. Meeting of Graef and Wheeler. The Deacon's arrival. The Deacon gets hilarious. The Deacon is sick.

Act II.—*Scene*—Mrs. Thornton's sitting-room. Pete promotes himself. Miss Amelia is anxious about her "dear little pet." The Deacon makes a mistake. "Were you and Bill married by candle light?" "Deacon, you are drunk." Miss Amelia prescribes for the Deacon.

Act III.—*Scene I.*—A street. Mother and child. The meeting of husband and wife. "What, you here?" Accused of many bitter things. Left in the streets.

Scene II.—Geo. Graef's lodgings. The finding of the diamonds. Meeting of Graef and Mrs. Darrah. "Minnie, is this you?" The photo. "Yes, alas, too well!"

Scene III.—A street. Pete persuades Billy to accompany him on an expedition.

Scene IV.—A wood. Treasure hunters. The treasure is found. Caught by the spirits.

Act IV.—*Scene*—Mrs. Thornton's sitting-room. Daisy shows Pete what she would do. Miss Amelia's heart is in a flutter. Pete at his tricks. Consternation. The Deacon taken by surprise. Again there is consternation. Billy creates excitement. "Thank Heaven! At last I enfold thee."

Act V.—*Scene*—Mrs. Thornton's sitting-room. The Deacon in clover. The interrupted marriage ceremony. "That man has a wife living." "'Tis false!" An attack. The villain foiled. Arrest of Geo. Darrah. Reinstatement of Graef. Mrs. Darrah and Nellie forgiven. The Deacon made happy.

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SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS.

Act I.—Deacon Thornton at home. Amelia delivers a curtain lecture, and the Deacon grows meek. Brandy and parsley. An innocent kiss. Dusty Jim. The jail-breakers. Pete at his old tricks. The Deacon to the rescue. "I fotched it, I fotched it!"

Act II.—The Deacon's sitting-room. Daisy's elation. A black and white bargain. The coon-hunt. "Swiping" the wrong victim. The letter from a tramp. Billy's pet rooster. The robbery and the clue. A resurrected mogul plays possum and creates a panic.

Act III.—Bums' retreat. The conspiracy. The coon-hunters. Pete makes a discovery. The Deacon comes home the worse for wear, and starts another upheaval. The abduction and the alarm. Amelia's predicament. "In Heaven's name, what does this mean?"

Act IV.—Awaiting developments at Bums' retreat. A midnight hold-up. A tilt between Amelia and Daisy. The Deacon's promise. A new surprise. Dusty Jim's account of himself. Reconciliation. "United we stan', 'vided we fall. Hooray!"

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SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS.

Act I.—Scene, the farmhouse sitting-room. The declaration. The temptation. Signing the mortgage. Millie's departure.

Act II.—Same scene, a year later. The raised notes. Foreclosure of the mortgage. Eviction.

Act III.—Scene, Millie's room in city boarding house. Disclosure of the plot. Friends on the track. The attempted murder. Millie's fearful mistake.

Act IV.—Scene in a street, afterwards room in a cheap boarding house. Millie falls into the trap for her betrayal. Destruction of the notes. The fire. The escape.

Act V.—Scene, the banker's parlor. The friend in disguise. The mock parson. Foiled. Millie's rescue. Redemption of the farm.

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SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS.

Act I.—Susan, the house tyrant. Dick awaits Geoffrey's arrival. The meeting at the cliff. The adventure. Departure of Susan.

Act II.—Two days later. The letter to Susan. The recognition. Carrots! Preparations for festivities. Love making.

Act III.—The game of tennis. The masquerade. Susan's letter. Consternation. Jane and her sailor. Return of Susan and her intended husband. Susan squelched. "Not a word, now." Engagements galore.

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